

## News



2011 Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship winner Michael Raelert of Germany on the podium at Laguna Phuket with runner-up Richie Cunningham (left) and third-placed Paul Matthews, both of Australia. Laguna **High resolution image available at:** [http://www.lagunaphuket.com/media-hub/imagegalleries/MediaReleases/307/T\\_op\\_3.jpg](http://www.lagunaphuket.com/media-hub/imagegalleries/MediaReleases/307/T_op_3.jpg)



Reigning Ironman 70.3 World Champion Melissa Rollison of Australia celebrates her victory at Laguna Phuket in the Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship. Laguna **High resolution image available at:** [http://www.lagunaphuket.com/media-hub/imagegalleries/MediaReleases/307/M\\_Rollison.jpg](http://www.lagunaphuket.com/media-hub/imagegalleries/MediaReleases/307/M_Rollison.jpg)



2011 Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship winner Melissa Rollison on the podium at Laguna Phuket with runner-up Natascha Badmann of Switzerland (left) and third-placed Radka Vodickova of the Czech Republic. [http://www.lagunaphuket.com/media-hub/imagegalleries/MediaReleases/307/A\\_F0Y3556.jpg](http://www.lagunaphuket.com/media-hub/imagegalleries/MediaReleases/307/A_F0Y3556.jpg)

### **Raelert Triumphs in Record Time at Rain-Hit Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship**

Two-time Ironman 70.3 world champion Michael Raelert lit up a rain-hit Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship in Phuket with a blazing performance that slashed eight minutes off the course record and saw him finish five minutes ahead of nearest rivals, Australians Richie Cunningham and Paul Matthews, to claim the US\$12,000 top prize.

He made his record time of 03:51:36 despite the downpours on an unseasonable overcast day on the holiday island that played havoc on the bike course and brought heartbreak for hotly-tipped Ironman bike specialist Chris Lieto of the USA, who was forced to retire after crashing just 20k into the tough 90k ride.

Raelert, making his first appearance in Phuket, was keen to end his season on a high note after injuries earlier this year forced him to abandon the defence of his Ironman 70.3 World Championship title at Las Vegas in September.

He was among a field of 34 male and female international pro athletes and more than 1,000 age groupers competing the 1.9k swim, 90k bike and 21.1k run course for a slice of a US\$75,000 pro purse and championship points, as well as coveted age group slots for the 2012 Ironman 70.3 and Ironman World Championships.

Raelert won with a swim time of 00:23:24; bike of 02:14:17 and run of 01:11:15. Cunningham, Laguna Phuket Triathlon champion in 2008, was runner-up on 03:57:16 with a swim time of 00:23:55, bike of 02:14:07 and run of 01:16:44; and Matthews finished on 03:58:24 with a swim time of 00:23:39, bike of 02:14:14 and run of 01:18:02.

In the women's pro field, Melissa Rollison of Australia, reigning Ironman 70.3 world champion and last year's Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship runner-up, cruised to an emphatic victory and claimed the US\$12,000 top prize in 04:17:01, a massive 13 minutes ahead of Switzerland's Natascha Badmann on 04:30:42.

They were joined in third place by last week's Laguna Phuket Triathlon women's champion Radka Vodickova of the Czech Republic, who shrugged off a knee injury sustained a few days earlier in a bike accident with a gutsy run in her first-ever Ironman 70.3 that saw her surge through the field to finish on 04:34:50, dashing the podium hopes of rising UK star Emma-Kate Lidbury.

Rollison won with a swim time of 00:27:32; bike of 02:36:29 and run of 01:19:44; Badmann was runner-up with a swim time of 00:30:00; bike of 02:26:01 and run of 01:30:57; and Vodickova finished with a swim time of 00:26:13, bike of 02:39:04 and run of 01:26:26.

Raelert was a commanding presence early in the race, overtaking swim leader Daniel Halksworth of the UK on the water exit to join the leading bike pack of Lieto, Cunningham, Matthews, Matt Reed of the USA and Jason McHugh of Australia.

After Lieto crashed out he was content to stay among the pack as the skies darkened and rain poured down, but at the run transition – with weather conditions more favourable for runners - he took the lead, stretching it to more than two minutes at the half-way point of the two-loop course.

"The conditions out on the bike course were incredible, it was dark with torrential rain," Raelert said. "We had to slow down, but that meant I could relax a bit and prepare for the run."

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"This is just a fantastic event. Even when the rain was coming down the people were still lining the roads cheering us on. It really encouraged all of us.

"After the setbacks of this season it's great to end on a high note with a good win and I'm sure this will be a springboard for my next season."

It was a disappointing day for three-time Laguna Phuket Triathlon champion and crowd favourite Massimo Cigana. The Italian, who won his third LPT title last weekend and was bidding to follow-up his runner-up place in last year's Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship, finished sixth in 04:01:54.

But it was a good day for Australia, with five Australians among the top eight men's prize positions and three in the women's top eight, including winner Melissa Rollison.

Top Thai male finisher was the country's fast-rising triathlete star Jaray Jearanai of Phuket, in a personal best of 04:38:38 on his home course, with a swim time of 00:32:57, bike of 02:30:36 and run of 01:31:13. Top Thai female was Nampetch Porntharukcharoen in 06:22:28, with a swim time of 00:45:09, bike of 03:18:24 and run of 02:09:55.

The day was also a triumph for the oldest competitor, 79 years-old Hiromu Inada of Japan, who finished in 06:42:01 with a swim time of 00:45:41, bike of 03:30:30 and run of 02:15:26.

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**Results**

**Men**

1. Michael Raelert (GER) 03:51:36 – US\$12,000.
2. Richie Cunningham (AUS) 03:57:16 – US\$8,000.
3. Paul Matthews (AUS) 03:58:24 – US\$5,500.
4. Timothy James (AUS) 03:59:57 – US\$4,000.
5. David Dellow (AUS) 04:01:11 - US\$3,500.
6. Massimo Cigana (ITA) 04:01:54 – US\$2,000.
7. Paul Ambrose (AUS) 04:02:18 – US\$1,500.
8. Matt Reed (USA) 04:05:14 – US\$1,000.

**Women**

1. Melissa Rollison (AUS) 04:17:01 – US\$12,000.
2. Natascha Badmann (SUI) 04:30:42 – US\$8,000.
3. Radka Vodickova (CZE) 04:34:50 – US\$5,500.
4. Emma-Kate Lidbury (GBR) 04:36:09 – US\$4,000.
5. Tamsin Lewis (GBR) 04:36:14 - US\$3,500.
6. Michelle Wu (AUS) 04:38:27 – US\$2,000.
7. Katja Rabe (GER) 04:40:34 – US\$1,500.
8. Belinda Granger (AUS) 04:41:10 – US\$1,000.

**Note to the Editor**

Laguna Phuket is Asia's finest destination resort – a collection of deluxe hotels and villas including Banyan Tree Phuket, Angsana Laguna Phuket, Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket, Laguna Beach Resort, Outrigger Laguna Phuket Resort and Villas, Best Western Allamanda Laguna Phuket, Laguna Holiday Club Resort, and Laguna Property offering luxury investment and lifestyle residential properties - all sharing 1,000 acres of tropical parkland and three kilometres of beach frontage with the Laguna Phuket Golf Club, Canal Shopping Village, Banyan Tree Spa, four Angsana Spas, Laguna Wedding Chapel, Quest Laguna Phuket Adventure an on-site team building facility, and Latitude a unique stand-alone function venue.



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